

in infancy. He would prefer to die in an inn rather than at home (and yet is that so strange?). He speaks fondly of friendship; but little of friends—with one exception. And that one is long dead.

We should have a different impression, I think, had we known Montaigne younger. Like Johnson, he is elderly—far older indeed than his years—when we first come to know him intimately. Yet for his father, it is clear, he had felt deep affection; it was to please him that Montaigne married and that he translated Ramond Sebond. And as for the one perfect friend, Etienne de la Boetie, let Montaigne speak for himself of what his life has been since death ended that: 'Si ie la compare aux quatre annees qu'il m'a este donne de iouyr de la douce compaignie et societe de ce personnage, ce n'est que fume, ce n'est qu'une nuict obscure et ennuyeuse.' Some will be horrified that he deliberately set himself to distract his misery at the time with love-affairs; and some will understand, Seventeen years later, at the Baths of Lucca, a reminder of that lost friend is still enough to plunge him in a fit of melancholy. Montaigne was not cold; but he had grown afraid of warmth. He will not or cannot, like Ronsard, fly back and back to the flame.

But there is wisdom which is wise for mankind at large and wisdom which is wise only for certain individuals.

Montaigne's hatred of brutality, fanaticism, and the base-

ness unworthy of *une nature bien nee' is
valid for the
whole world. But it is for those who are so
built themselves as to find his personality
sympathetic, that he
becomes, what he sometimes seems to me,
perhaps the
wisest man who has ever written. He has
that calm and
dignified sanity which distinguishes some
Chinese poetry,
some eighteenth-century prose. 'Strong
feelings, but no
violent beliefs, no wild enthusiasms'—that is
surely one